

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 495

By Haile

A RESOLUTION to recognize Jesse McReynolds on his illustrious career in bluegrass music and honor him on his fiftieth anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should recognize those gifted artists who have experienced great success in the world of bluegrass music; and

WHEREAS, Jesse McReynolds, one-half of the famed Jim & Jesse bluegrass duo, is a legend in the world of bluegrass music; known as “Mr. Mandolin” and the “Ironman of Bluegrass,” Jesse has influenced generations of bluegrass musicians with his McReynolds style of mandolin playing, consisting of cross-picking and split-string techniques; and

WHEREAS, his enormous repertoire includes bluegrass, country, gospel, pop, rock, movie themes, show tunes, and classical pieces; he has created hundreds of original compositions, including “Dixie Hoe-Down,” “Drifting and Dreaming,” “Hard-Hearted,” “Just Wondering Why,” and “Border Ride,” and recorded more than 50 albums, with the majority of them still in print; and

WHEREAS, raised near Coeburn, Virginia by his parents, Claude and Savannah Robnett McReynolds, Jesse McReynolds grew up in a family steeped in traditional mountain music; he naturally followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, Charlie McReynolds, who was one of the first musicians to participate in recording sessions for Victor in Bristol, Virginia in 1927, the event that gave birth to the rise of modern country music and also featured recordings by Jimmy Rodgers and the Carter Family; and

WHEREAS, inspired by the five-string banjo-playing of Hoke Jenkins, Jesse McReynolds originated the complex cross-picking style of mandolin playing; as an instrumental

innovator on the mandolin, Jesse McReynolds is considered to be in the same class as guitarist Chet Atkins, banjoist Earl Scruggs, and trumpeter Miles Davis; and

WHEREAS, Jim & Jesse McReynolds made their first musical appearance at a local talent show, winning first place and a bag of flower for their efforts, and thus a truly wonderful and remarkable career was born; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, when Jim was discharged from the Army, the McReynolds brothers began their first professional work by performing live on several radio stations, the first being WNVA in Norton, Virginia; in 1952, they signed a contract with Capitol Records and recorded eight sides at a Nashville session that year and in 1953, their second session was recorded while Jesse was on active duty in the Army but at home on leave; and

WHEREAS, their harmony was exceptional; Jim's enhanced high tenor combined with Jesse's deep lead and unique mandolin style set this duo apart in the world of traditional music, which is now termed bluegrass; and

WHEREAS, very early in their career, Jesse developed a McReynolds-style technique on the mandolin which distinguished his picking from others; many have imitated but few have successfully mastered his unique style of fast execution of intricate melodic patterns; and

WHEREAS, in March 1964, they were invited to become members of the world famous Grand Ole Opry, and in 1967, the duo had a Top 20 country hit with "Diesel on My Tail," such classics as "The Flame of Love," "Cotton Mill Man," and "Paradise" followed soon thereafter; and

WHEREAS, Jim & Jesse regularly made the country charts from the 1960s through the 1980s, with such tunes as "Better Times A-Coming," "Ballad of Thunder Road," "Freight Train," "North Wind," and "Oh Louisiana"; and

WHEREAS, Jesse McReynolds and his brother, Jim, performed all across the United States and traveled worldwide, including: Canada, Mexico, Japan, Europe, The British Isles, and, under the sponsorship of the State Department, Africa; they played such notable venues as the Newport Jazz Festival, Smithsonian Institution Folk Festival, Great Lakes Folk Festival, Philadelphia Folk Festival, the American Folk Festival, and many more; and

WHEREAS, as the result of a long and prosperous musical career, Jesse McReynolds has been inducted into several well-known music organizations and received many honors, including the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship Award, International Bluegrass Music Association's Hall of Honors, the Country Music Hall of Fame's "Walkway of Stars," the Virginia Country Music Hall of Fame, Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Hall of Fame, Best Country Instrumental Recording in 1979 with Vassar Clements, Instrumental Recording of the Year in 1990, with "The Masters," IBMA award in 2000 for Best Instrumental Recording, and in 2005, Special Recorded Event of the Year and IBMA nomination for Instrumental Recording of the Year for his project of mostly original tunes, "Bending the Rules"; and

WHEREAS, the McReynolds brothers performed as the duo Jim & Jesse from 1947 until Jim's death in 2002, and held the record for longest running brother duo act at 55 years; since Jim's death, Jesse has continued to meet listeners' demands for the great music of Jim & Jesse, while also striking out in new musical directions; and

WHEREAS, since completing what turned out to be Jim & Jesse's last album, "Tis Sweet to Be Remembered," Jesse has built a new edition of his backup band, the Virginia Boys; in 2004, he released the "New Horizon" album, which featured the patriotic single "America on Bended Knees"; and

WHEREAS, in October 2010, Jesse released an album titled "Jesse McReynolds & Friends Tribute to Jerry Garcia & Robert Hunter, Songs of the Grateful Dead" to a very warm response from the music world, and, in December 2010, he joined many of Jerry Garcia's friends to pay tribute to the late great musician by playing the Rex Foundation Benefit in "The Wheel: A Music Tribute to Jerry Garcia," at the legendary Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, Jesse McReynolds and the Virginia Boys still tour, performing frequently at bluegrass festivals, in addition to their regular Grand Ole Opry appearances; and

WHEREAS, his many musical accomplishments aside, Jesse McReynolds is most grateful for the love, support, and companionship he shares with his wife, Joy McReynolds; his children, Gwen, Keith, Michael, and Randy McReynolds; his eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild; and his sisters, Stella and Virginia; and

WHEREAS, it is the dream of every country music artist to be a member of the Grand Ole Opry and perform on the stages of the historic Ryman Auditorium and the Grand Ole Opry House, and it is most fitting that Jesse McReynolds should be recognized on this special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and recognize Jesse McReynolds on his illustrious career in bluegrass music and congratulate him on his fiftieth anniversary as a member of the Grand Ole Opry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.